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UNCLAS MUSCAT 000396

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENTSTATE FOR OES/PCI, (MTOKMAN, ESHAW), NEA/ARPI,
STATE ALSO FOR NEA/PD AND (CWHITTLESEY), NEA/PI (DMULENEX,
CBOURGEOIS, CMERIWETHER)

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: BASIC SCIENCE AND MATH EDUCATIONCOLLABORATION: INTEREST,
BUT RESOURCES?

REF: A) STATE 23320

B) GRIMM-ECHEVARRIA EMAIL OF 9/12/05

[1](#)1. This is an action message. Please see paragraph 76.

SUMMARY

[1](#)21. Embassy Muscat applauds USG plans to support science and mathematics education in the region and ssees excellent potential for numerous partnerships that would enable the reftel initiative to be successfully implemented in Oman. The Embassy would require additional resources to participate in this initiative, however, and would also require a response regarding Oman's participation in the GLOBE program before proceeding further.
End Summary.

STRONG INTEREST IN INITIATIVE

[1](#)32. Our conversations with host country interlocutors - including the Ministry of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, and the private sector - point to a strong interest in strengthening science and mathematics education in Omanthe Sultanate. The Ministry of Education (MOE), for example, is particularly keen to learn about U.S. methodology in these subject areas, pointing out that Oman's curriculum is "too heavy on theory." To help address this shortcoming, a private company, "Science Genius," offers an after-school, child-centered, teacher-guided "hobby" introduction to science for 8-15 year olds. The MOE has asked the director of Science Genius to open centers in two other cities in Oman in addition to the one already established in Muscat. Two museums - the Children's Museum and the Natural History Museum - are also eager to build capacity to reach out to schools. While Omani NGO's are limited in scope and number, the Environment Society of Oman is developing a variety of outreach programs to schools to enhance the relevance of the science curriculum.

[1](#)43. In reviewing the possible activities outlined in reftel, as well as other options, Embassy Muscat believes that the following ideas would have the most impact in Oman:

-- a) identifying ways to expand the reach of "Science Genius," particularly in areas outside of Muscat;
-- b) providing teacher training - through workshops and exchanges - in best practices in science and mathematics education, focusing in particular on methodology;
-- c) partnering with one of the museums mentioned above to organize science exhibits; and,
-- d) assisting one or more schools to organize local science fairs and/or math competitions.

RESOURCES/GLOBE UPDATE KEY

[1](#)54. While we arethe Embassy is enthusiastic about moving forwa ready to supportrd to implement this initiative in Oman, human resources are extremely thin and financial resources are non-existent. Funding to support an short-term EFM or FSN position to launch and oversee the program/s listed above would be critical to the success of the initiative.

[1](#)65. Furthermore, the Embassy has not received a response regarding Oman's participation in the GLOBE program. LastOn September 11, Econoff met with Sana al-Belushi, Director of the Technical Office for Studies and Development at the Ministry of Education, who provided comments on the proposed GLOBE Agreement between the Ministry and NASA. These comments were forwarded to State and the GLOBE program coordinator over six months ago on September 12 (r(ref B), but we have receivedthere has as yet been no response.

ACTION REQUEST

[1](#)76. Embassy Muscat requests OES to coordinate a response to the comments made by Omanthe Sultanate regarding the GLOBE Agreement

between the Ministry of Education and NASA, and to p and to
addressprovide feedback on resource support concerns raised in
para 54. End action request.

STEWARTBALTIMORE